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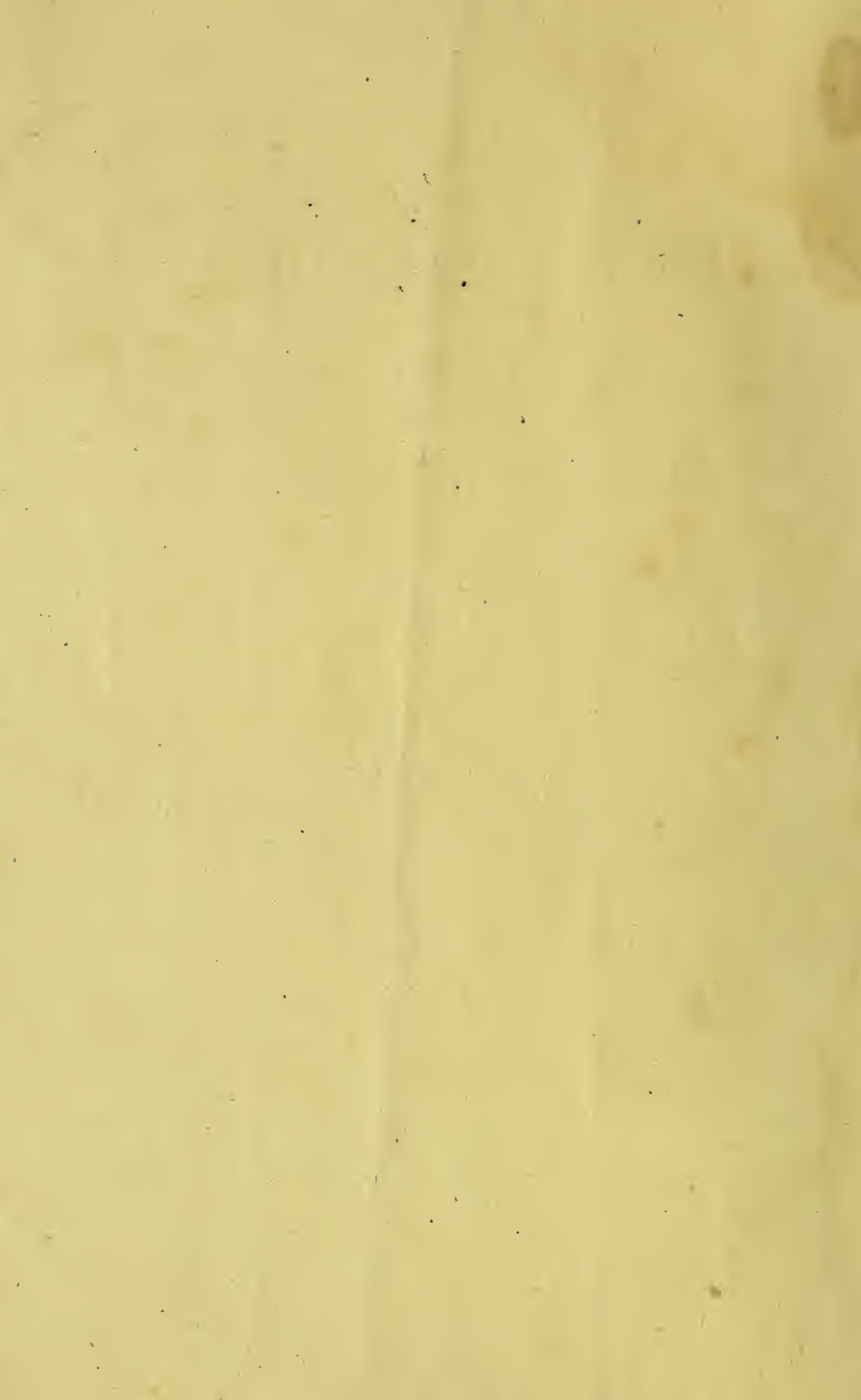
PIOUS SOLICITUDE FOR ONE'S OWN PEOPLE:

A Sermon, by Rev. J. LANSING BURROWS, D. D.

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PIOUS SOLICITUDE FOR ONE'S OWN PEOPLE.

A Sermon by Rev. J. LANSING BURROWS, D. D., preached before the Baptist General Association of Virginia, met at Lynchburg, Va., June 1, 1856, and published by their request.

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*"Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request."*  
ESTHER VII: 3.

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THE mighty and magnificent monarch of Persia and Media, whose dominions extended from India to Ethiopia, who reigned absolute sovereign over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces, sits in gorgeous state, upon his golden throne in the inner court of his royal palace. None may presumptuously, without direct summons, approach the threshold of that splendid court, except at the hazard of life. The rash intruder will be condemned to speedy death, unless the monarch stretch out his golden scepter, as a token of favor. Suddenly the eyes of the king rest upon one, who pale and trembling, as if conscious of the peril, presses unbidden to the foot of the throne. In another moment it is death or life to her. If the king, angry at the rash intrusion, but avert his eye, rude hands will drag her thence, to sudden execution. But he smiles, holds out his scepter to her touch, and encourages her to offer her urgent petition. A beautiful heroine stands before him, who with the noble resolve upon her lip—"If I perish, I perish"—has thus

braved death that she may plead for the life of her people. The burden of her pathetic prayer is expressed in the words of the text: "Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request." From the toils of destruction which the malicious jealousy of Haman has drawn around her and her kindred, she thus secures deliverance.

Brethren, by the machinations of a malignant adversary, of whom Haman was a weak type, the eternal death of ourselves and of our people is threatened. As the bride of the great king, the church of God, without danger or dread, may seek admission to the Royal Presence, touch the scepter of her Sovereign and prefer her petition for the deliverance of her kindred. With assurance of a gracious reception, and identifying ourselves with our ruined race, we may come boldly to the throne, and plead, "Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request."

Does not the text furnish a profitable theme for our present meditations in the suggestion of this thought:

PIOUS SOLICITUDE FOR ONE'S OWN PEOPLE.

May the Holy Spirit clearly reveal to us, our obligations to those who may properly be called our own people, and graciously dispose us to answer these obligations in our prayers and labors.

I. The love of kindred, race and native land, so universally cherished, is in no degree checked or cooled by religious devotion. PIETY INTENSIFIES PATRIOTISM.

Personal vices mould traitors and anarchists like Cataline and Arnold, but personal virtue and integrity, characterize eminent patriots like Tell and Washington.

All right affections are strengthened by piety. No man loves his home less, because he becomes a Christian. To all other sources of interest in it, will now be added the spiritual desire to redeem it from every vice, to promote among its dwellers every virtue. From a necessity of his renewed nature, the Christian must war against every thing that tends to degrade and demoralize his people, and must cherish all that purifies and elevates,



and thus contribute according to the measure of his influence to their virtuous prosperity.

They slander Christianity who intimate that it fosters mawkish or utopian benevolence, that looks beyond immediate and palpable claims, while it weeps over miseries it can not reach; that it passes by the wounded man lying helplessly by the home wayside, in its haste to reach more distant sufferers; that it attenuates our love of home, by unduly expanding the embrace of the affections. It is not the religion taught in the Holy Scriptures, and exemplified by Christ and early Christians, that turns indifferently from the claims of the household and the neighborhood to busy itself with distant woes—that snatches the bread for which wife and child are starving and bears it away to hungry strangers. In His personal ministry Jesus was “not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and in turning from his own nation, upon its rejection of his message, St. Paul experienced intense agony of heart. Even in writing to a foreign nation, he could not repress his intense solicitude for his own people; “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart, for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” “My heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”

Into whatever gentile city the apostle came, his first steps were directed to the synagogue, eager to announce to his own people, the good news of their Messiah’s advent. “Beginning at Jerusalem,” all the apostles entered upon their holy mission. The whole noble army of martyrs and confessors might have saved themselves from the dungeon and stake by expatriating themselves, or by silently disregarding the ignorance and guilt that environed them. But they loved their own people better than they loved life, and they remained among them and sought their highest welfare, though cursed and murdered for their love. By such precepts and exemplifications are repelled the intimations, that Christianity

fosters a prurient benevolence for distant peoples, at the expense of sympathy and solicitude for the neighborhood and the native land. Christianity, like commerce, may bear its precious merchandize to every land, but its aim first of all is, to enrich its own. Still we would not be misunderstood. Christianity does frown upon a proud, selfish, exclusive Japanese nationalism, it enlarges patriotism into philanthropy, and teaches us to look with interest and compassion upon the whole race of man.

II. Let us then more particularly notice in their natural order, THE PROPER OBJECTIVE MANIFESTATIONS OF CHRISTIAN SOLICITUDE. An intimation of the fitting order of these manifestations is suggested by the text: "Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request."

The first object of solicitude to a Christian is himself—the spirituality and salvation of his own soul. "My life."—For his own everlasting interests he must himself first care, or no anxieties of others will be of any avail to him. He is responsible as no other can be for the well being of his own spirit. No exaggeration of the doctrine of "disinterested benevolence," can justify any one, in neglecting his own spiritual welfare, or in giving it a secondary place in his anxieties and struggles. Indeed unless he personally feel his own guilt and danger, he never can duly feel for others. Unless he know by personal experience, the preciousness of the gospel of Christ, he never can justly estimate its value in blessing and saving others. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." It is only when God restore unto us the joy of His salvation, and uphold us with His free Spirit, that we shall be fitted to "teach transgressors His ways, and labor, that sinners shall be converted unto Him."

Next to himself, his own immediate family claims the nearest place in his solicitude. If it be true in temporal, how much more in spiritual matters, that, if any provide not for his own and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.

Upon whom can a man's own household present such claims for religious culture as upon himself? No other can supply his lack of service. Responsibility rests upon him in relation to the pious training of his own household, which he can not evade or shift off upon others. His neglect no labors of others can excuse or repair.

His immediate circle of kindred and acquaintance claim the next place in the Christian's heart. Then those who are so associated with him by social or secular ties as most naturally to look to him for interest and regard. By so much as their relations are intimate with him—by so much as his example and instruction may influence them, by so much is he responsible for their spiritual welfare, and such relations and possible influences should determine the comparative degree of his solicitude and strivings for their good.

Then will follow those to whom he sustains relations of obligation in common with other Christians.

True godly benevolence, thus works outwardly from self as the center, giving its first and most fervent anxieties to personal safety and spirituality; enclosing in its nearest circles, family and kindred; thence extending to neighbors and citizens, and widening ever until the world is embraced in the circumference of its cares. This is the natural outworking of the leaven of the gospel.

If this be the true theory of the proper consecutive manifestations of Christian solicitude, then those formal organizations, that are adapted to secure these objects in their natural order, are to be in that order cherished.

*His own church*, then, as this is fitted to exert the most direct influence upon the spirituality of himself, his family and neighbors, demands the first place in his affections and cares. He reverses the true law of Christian solicitude, whose affections are strongest abroad and weakest at home. Next to his church, the Christian should cherish and support any neighborhood association, wisely organized, and intended to evangelize the community in which he lives. Here then is the place which church out-stations, city missions, county or associational missions, Bible distribution, colportage, should occupy in



our hearts. The first obligations to sustain such organizations must rest upon Christians most nearly in contact with them, for none others can be so naturally expected to seek their efficiency.

Next to these follows a State organization. The spiritual interests of a State are naturally to be first sought, by the Christians within its boundaries. I do not say that the Christians within any specific territorial limits, may not look for sympathy and aid from Christians beyond them. This especially in newly settling countries is often necessary. Still their own influence and toil and benefactions, primarily belong to the commonwealth in which they dwell. None can so efficiently feel and toil there as themselves. Next follow our obligations to the country of which we are citizens, to those sections of the outer field that are most immediately dependent upon us, and finally to the whole world. In a word those who may be most directly dependent upon our influence, prayers and charities, for their spiritual welfare, have the first claims upon us; and these claims are in the order of such dependence. While I am sincerely convinced that this indicates the true evolving order of Christian solicitude, I know it is often difficult for the Christian to graduate his labors and liberality according to a fixed scale. Sometimes a more remote department of Christian effort, may call for greater solicitude and sacrifice than a nearer; sometimes the healthful progress of affairs at home, may give us leisure and means, to aid more largely abroad. I would not divert a dobt of money or a thrill of interest from even the remotest section of the world. I would rather see these evangelizing operations everywhere indefinitely enlarged, but still, home, and the department of Christian effort nearest home, have the first, highest, holiest claims upon our pious solicitude and benevolence.

III. Nor is this seeking the evangelization of one's own people a mere optional service, in which Christians may or may not engage, at their own pleasure,—which they may neglect without guilt or condemnation. We are subjects and servants of the Lord Almighty, and we



are to listen for the utterance of His voice, to watch the indications of His will, and it is at the peril of our souls that we disobey. Obedience is essential to piety, and no man can be a Christian, whatever may be his professions, who willfully and knowingly does what God forbids, or refuses to do what He requires. The man who can habitually disregard the call of God, either by active transgression or passive indifference, can neither gain nor give evidence, by faith or works, that he is a regenerate child of God. Is faith an evidence that one is truly a Christian? But he who perversely disregards a single requirement of God himself believing it to be a true requirement—gives evidence that he is without true faith in God. No matter to what the commandment relates, or by what methods it is revealed—whether it be almsgiving, forgiveness of injuries, baptism, visiting the sick or anything else,—if he admit that God requires it, and yet willfully withholds obedience, he shows that he is without faith in God's wisdom or authority. He who in the minutest matter, says in effect—I know that God requires this of me, but I will not do it, may have strong faith in his own judgment or predilections, but he has no proper faith in God. Such an one can gain no evidence from his faith that he is a Christian. Are works an evidence of piety? Then he who habitually fails in good works can gain no well-based evidence that he is a Christian. I repeat, then, he who knowingly and habitually disregards a call of God, can neither gain nor give by faith or works satisfactory evidence that he is a regenerate disciple of Jesus.

*Are we then as Christians, called by God to feel and toil for the salvation of our own people?* Mordecai encouraged Esther to undertake the hazardous office of pleading with the king for her people, by suggesting to her, that Jehovah had probably placed her in her high position, for this purpose. "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

I wish to show, that we are under stronger obligations to labor for the evangelizing of our own people—not merely, because it seems very desirable to us, nor simply,

because it will be a great present and eternal benefit to them—not primarily for the sake of promoting denominational interests, nor for gratifying our own pious voluntary yearnings, but mainly, because it is the will of God, and our obedience and allegiance to Him demand it.

That there is an "effectual calling" of God, by which His people are "brought from darkness into His marvelous light that we may show forth His praise," is a fundamental article of our faith. If we are the adopted children of God, separated from the world, enjoying the felicity of communion with heaven, intelligently indulging the hope of a pure and blissful immortality, it is because our Lord has spoken directly to our souls, saying "seek ye my face," and won from our impenitent stupidity by the persuasive sweetness of that call, our hearts have responded: "Thy face, O Lord! will we seek."

The call of God has united us in fellowship in his church. The churches of the saints have been organized to promote the comfort and spirituality of Christ's disciples, and to concentrate their energies for usefulness. The longing of our hearts for Christian aid and communion, in accordance with the injunctions of His word, we have interpreted as the voice of the Holy Spirit guiding us to the fold of Christ. From the brink of the baptismal stream we have heard the voice of Jesus saying: "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." From the head of the sacramental board, where the bread and the wine symbolize the broken body and flowing blood of our murdered Lord, the same voice has called to us: "This do in remembrance of me." We are in the church visible my brethren, if we are there intelligently and worthily, because God has called us there.

Now have we any such call of God for union with such an organization as this? Have we any indication of our heavenly Father's will in seeking through this General Association the regeneration of our people? There are some who object to every benevolent organization for which they do not find an exact type in the written word. Such are often distinguished from the churches as human institutions. If by this is meant that they are instituted

as Agricultural or Literary Societies, without any call from God, without seeking His mind, without reference to His pleasure, then the sooner we dissolve and abandon them the better.

My brethren, the Lord can teach us His will by His Spirit and His Providence. While it is a precious truth that all essential instructions are contained in the written word and the general principles by which Christians are to be governed, are there clearly evolved, yet we are not warranted in concluding that in relation to methods and means of operating for the enlargement of His kingdom God has in the Bible exhausted His wisdom or ceased His teachings to His people. Has the Holy Ghost left the world? Jesus promised a Comforter who should abide with His people forever, who should "guide them into all truth," "teach them all things." "Will not your Heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth liberally and upbraideth not."

It is an undisputed doctrine of our churches, that we may confidently pray for the direction of the Holy Spirit. When our hearts burn with desire to teach our fellow men the way of life, may we not assume that this holy fire is kindled by the Spirit of God? And when we humbly implore instruction of our ignorance, and beg that His wisdom may guide us to the adoption of such measures, as shall most effectually promote His kingdom, shall we have no answer, no faith of a response? And if in connection with such petitions our minds are directed to certain combinations and labors, may we not act upon these suggestions as a call from God. Thus did our fathers pray, who originated this General Association, thus have we prayed, and if these petitions have been answered, then we are associated here in obedience to divine direction, then this mode of doing good to our own people is approved of the Lord. If this be a correct view—and we are not presumptuous in praying for the enlightening and guiding influences of the Holy Spirit—then those who oppose this work are fighting against God, and those who withhold from it their influence and

aid are positively disobedient to a heavenly call. Upon this foundation, high and firm, would we base all our enterprises for evangelizing our race. If this will not sustain them then let them fall.

By the spiritual wants and woes of humanity, too, Jehovah indicates to His people their duty. From every spot where man is ignorant and depraved there sounds a call for instruction and guidance. Into all the world we are to carry the gospel wherever sins abound, to lift the standard of the cross wherever satan reigns, to announce and defend the truth wherever error prevails. That this is the great mission of the churches all admit. If God has explicitly revealed the methods by which this work is to be accomplished, then we are faithfully to pursue those methods; if not, then the means are left to our devising, under the Spirit's subsequent direction.

The call of God reaches us, in the cries for help of scattered and hungry disciples. When he had seen the vision of the Macedonian suppliant, the apostle says, "we assuredly gathered that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto him." The cry comes to us not as from shadows, but literally from human voices begging for the bread of life. We hear the call from the mountains and valleys of our State, and to disregard it, is not only heartlessness and cruelty to our brethren who appeal to us, but it is disobedience to God. The professing Christian who refuses a response to such entreaties, may well fear lest against him the denunciation be uttered, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my disciples ye did it not unto me."

The call of God to us may be heard in the wailings of perishing souls. Esther could already anticipate the shrieks and groanings of her kindred, as they were hunted to death by the murdering Persian bands. In agony of soul she appeals to the king: "How can I endure to see the evil that shall come upon my people, how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"

My brethren, it is an everlasting destruction that threatens thousands upon thousands of our people. How full of horror is this thought! Why is it that it affects



us so little? Oh! could we only gather statistical returns from the mouth of the pit, and display in figures the numbers of souls that increase the population of hell from this State, from each city, town, county of this State, yearly, monthly, weekly, how appalling would be the statement, how fitted to nerve all our powers, concentrate all our energies in the work of saving souls. These wailings of the perishing are not the less grating and fearful in Christian ears, because they are muffled by the careless laugh of impenitence, or the din of godless intercourse, or the clamors of blasphemy. From beneath all these surface sounds comes up to the spiritual ear of the Christian the cry of a condemned soul. That men know not their own danger, feel not their own wants, regard not their own spiritual interests, furnishes even stronger appeals to our benevolence and zeal, than if they had a true appreciation of their own condition. This shows us the greater necessity for our interference and instruction.

In just such a state of helpless stupidity Jesus pitied us and hastened to save. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you," said the Saviour in designating to His disciples the nature of their work. "Let the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus." Dear brethren, can we at all apprehend the guilt and danger of our fellow-men, and not hasten by all the methods within our reach, to announce to them the gospel of Jesus, by which alone, as we believe, they can be saved.

Again, God calls us "to be fellow-helpers to the truth," and the truth in relation to the purely spiritual character of Christ's kingdom is deformed and mutilated, within the field assigned for our culture.

Is Christ's kingdom to be enlarged and perpetuated by the Holy Spirit's work in the hearts of individual men, or by hereditary transmission of church privileges? Is the church rightly constituted of those born of the flesh, or those born of the Spirit? In these questions we have the essential point of difference between our churches and others bearing the Christian name. And it is not a difference of small import. It

involves the foundation principle of church building. Is it natural generation, or spiritual regeneration that gives a scriptural title to membership in the church? One of the bishops of the Episcopal church said a few years ago, that he was persuaded "that God in His wise providence has permitted the rise of the Baptists, for the purpose of ultimately restoring the primitive mode of baptism." I am as firmly persuaded that God thro' their influence will teach the Christian world who are the proper subjects of baptism, and thus restore the purely spiritual theory of the New Testament.

The theory that mingles church and world together, by regarding something else as a qualification for church membership, than the regenerating influences of the Spirit of God—a heretical theory which originated at Rome, which unhappily was fostered at Wittenberg, and nursed at Oxford, which was even received at Geneva, and retained at Moorfields,—has, as I honestly conceive, more sadly weakened and deformed the churches of Christ than any other single false doctrine. This foundation error, even where most modified, has dimmed the luster and impaired the power of the kingdom of the Redeemer—in some sections has legislated the Holy Ghost out of the church, seeking to supersede His own gracious work of regeneration and sanctification by empty outward ceremonials—and instead of His convincing and renewing energies, seeking to perpetuate the church by hereditary increase. Against this whole system we are solemnly called to bear an earnest and perpetual protest, not indeed in an acrimonious or uncharitable temper, for this the gospel forbids, but still as standing by the eternal truth of God, we are called upon to bear a testimony decided and unwavering.

If then we consider the relation of this General Association, in its peculiar home work, to the wants of our feeble churches and dispersed brethren, to the needs of tens of thousands of perishing souls, to the demands of a pure spiritual Christianity, are we not evidently called to a work of infinite importance to the well being of our people?

While this work appeals most touchingly to our sympathy and benevolence, while it addresses all that is Christ-like in our nature, I have yet aimed to show that our obligations to engage in it are primarily based upon the positive call of God. It involves not merely sympathies and emotions, but obedience. To constrain us to pray and toil for the regeneration of our State, we have what is equivalent to a positive command.

Suppose that a direct communication from heaven, were addressed personally to each Christian in all our churches, requiring each to pray and labor and give for the evangelization of the State, would such direct order, make it more clearly or certainly the duty of each than it now is? No, my brethren, no new revelation could shed a stronger light upon our obligations, than we may now gain from the principles of the gospel, the intimations of God's Spirit and providence, and the condition and claims of our fellow-men. To withhold our influence, prayers, energies and property from such a work, is not guiltlessly to decline a voluntary offering—it is to refuse obedience to the clearly expressed requirement of God. It is not a simple question of generosity, it is a question of obedience, and I would it could thus be pressed upon the consciences of all our brethren, in all our churches. He who refuses to co-operate and contribute, for the furtherance of such a work, as God has given him the ability, is not merely selfish and narrow hearted and illiberal, he is more, he is disobedient to his Maker, Redeemer and Holy Instructor. He is not only untrue to his native land, and to the kingdom of Christ, he is unfaithful to his God and Saviour and Comforter. He does not only passively manifest an ungenerous heart, but he positively exhibits a disobedient spirit.

IV. Let us proceed to consider the ultimate purpose of this Christian solicitude. At what end are we to aim by the combining of Christian influences and efforts?

If a place has been given us among the disciples of Jesus, it is not merely or mainly, that we may secure our own personal comfort, edification or safety. The duties of a Christian profession do not terminate, upon



ourselves. He who seeks in his union with the church, simply his own spiritual advantage or enjoyment, who during his whole life time, considers himself "a babe in Christ," to be fostered in a spiritual nursery, or a sickly patient to be doctored in a religious hospital, has sadly misapprehended the purpose for which the church has been organized.

The church of Christ is designed to be an aggressive institution—an invading army, marshalling its members as soldiers, capable of enduring "hardness," provided with armor "not carnal but mighty;" soldiers, disciplined, obedient, courageous to "fight the good fight of faith."

It is sadly evident that many Christians hold very indefinite views of the purpose for which they are called into the kingdom of Christ. There is perhaps more widely than ever since apostolic days, an impression upon pious hearts of personal Christian obligation. But even yet it is vague and undefined. Neither the extent to which it reaches, nor the manner in which it is to be answered is clearly comprehended. Christian zeal acting without fixed plan and purpose, is somewhat like the working of a locomotive off the track, plunging, but making no progress. The man of business, who, under the impression that he has a great deal to accomplish during the day, dashes industriously into his work, without system or order, or a clear apprehension of what is to be done, or how it is to be done, will effect but little. So have Christians, under fitful impulses of desire to do good, acting without plan or end, almost wasted those energies and influences, which wisely directed would have effected most beneficent results.

There are springs in the Sahara, that just bubble up above the surface of the sands, creating a little green spot immediately around the out-gush, but there is no channel for the flow of the stream and it sinks almost uselessly into the sands. The checked rivulet rightly directed, perennially flowing, would redeem many a waste spot from barrenness, and be traced far by a line of verdure and beauty. So Christian zeal definitely guided by



principle, aiming at a distinct object, systematically and perpetually pursuing that object, will effect what spasmodic impulses, however violent, never can.

When a company of wise worldly men associate together to prosecute any important enterprise—as the building of a manufactory, or the construction of a railroad,—their views of the purpose and responsibilities of their organization are clear and definite. They know precisely what they combine to effect, and so order the means as to secure the result. If they were to tell us that they had no definite end to gain, that they were building or grading simply in order to keep busy, we should deem them insane.

Is it not equally important that we, in our benevolent organizations, should hold up before ourselves definite ends to gain? Is it more rational for us to say, that we are merely laboring under the pressure of a vague accountability in order to be employed, and without any clearly defined final purpose?

What is the end for which this General Association is laboring? For what ultimate purpose are we associated? Is it merely to station preachers of the gospel at certain destitute points? Is it simply to secure a subsistence for good brethren while they preach the gospel of Christ? Is it thus we attain the end of our combination, or are these only the means used for gaining results still beyond? Is our work done when we have in this commonwealth thirty, sixty, an hundred missionaries employed? Oh, my brethren, is it worthy of us to terminate our thoughts, anxieties and prayers upon what should be considered only as instrumentalities for a holier purpose beyond? The end of the labors of a builder is not to employ workmen, or to collect materials, it is to finish houses, and the workmen and the material are only means. Is it not, because we fix our attention principally upon the means, and make these our end, that we accomplish so comparatively little. If we deem that our work is done, when we have a certain number of missionaries employed, of stations supplied, we shall be satisfied when we have appointed the men, and contri-

buted the means for their support; but if we regard these only as the instruments for gaining a final purpose, the salvation of men, we shall pray more fervently, labor more steadily and perseveringly that this purpose may be attained. If we as well as our missionaries aim to convert men, to build up the kingdom of Christ, by these agencies, we shall feel that a large portion of our work is to be done in our closets and homes, by prayer and unabating solicitude, and that this is infinitely more important than our pecuniary contributions.

The great purpose of this General Association—in relation to this commonwealth—if a sickly faith will permit us to rise to an idea so sublime, so godlike—should be the spiritual regeneration of the whole State. We aim or should aim, to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ upon every mountain and into every valley, into every hamlet and neighborhood, and keep it there and press it upon the hearts and consciences of the people, and together daily implore the efficient influences of the Holy Spirit, until the inhabitants of this whole State are evangelized.

Is there a smile of incredulity at such a proposition as though it savored of fanaticism? Is it only a shallow enthusiasm that would aim at such result? Brethren, what less than this ought to be our purpose? Where ought we to fix our standard? If we aim only to help a few feeble churches to sustain a few scattered missionaries, we shall do what we aim to do, and nothing more. If we strive for little things, we shall accomplish little things. While such glorious purposes seem extravagant to Christians, there will be but insignificant victories won by the church. We have not yet risen to a proper conception of our holy calling. That God has called the church to the work of the world's conversion is now a theoretical article of her faith. Has she yet entered upon the work, as though she faithfully meant to accomplish it, in the strength and by the grace of God?

If the conversion of the whole world by the whole church, is not a work too mighty for its abilities, guided by the Holy Spirit, then is the conversion of this section

of the world too great for this section of the church? We have become familiar with the general idea that the world is to be subdued to Christ thro' the agency of the church. Let us suppose that the whole earth were divided into districts, and that one district should be assigned to each specified portion of the church, with the direct command of Christ, "Go disciple that nation or neighborhood." Every Christian people, so far as able, in such a division would be required to supply the means of grace to all within their geographical boundaries. The entire evangelization of Virginia would be required of the Christians in Virginia. Each county, each city, each township would naturally be the first object of solicitude to its own Christians. Wherever in any given section the work should be too great for its own disciples, help would be called for and given by the nearest able to render it. There would thus be a concentration of all the redundant influences upon the more destitute sections, and soon would "the wilderness and the solitary place be glad for us, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose." What would be required of Virginia Christians in such a division? Should we be deemed incompetent to the evangelizing of our own territory, and be authorized by the Master to send over for help to Pennsylvania or North Carolina? Is our proportion of Christians on the soil too small, supposing an equal distribution of evangelical labors over the whole earth? No! No! in such a division of spiritual labor, other sections more destitute still, of our own wide land, and some large district of heathen territory, would fall to our share. It would be found that we had here far more than our own proportion, compared with the wants of the whole world. If such a division could be literally made and the work of each church and of each Christian specifically assigned, and each made responsible for the manner and spirit in which he obeyed and labored, if the success of the whole scheme depended upon the faithfulness of each in their own sphere of operations, Oh! with what zeal and energy and earnest prayer would each faithful disciple prosecute his allotted work.

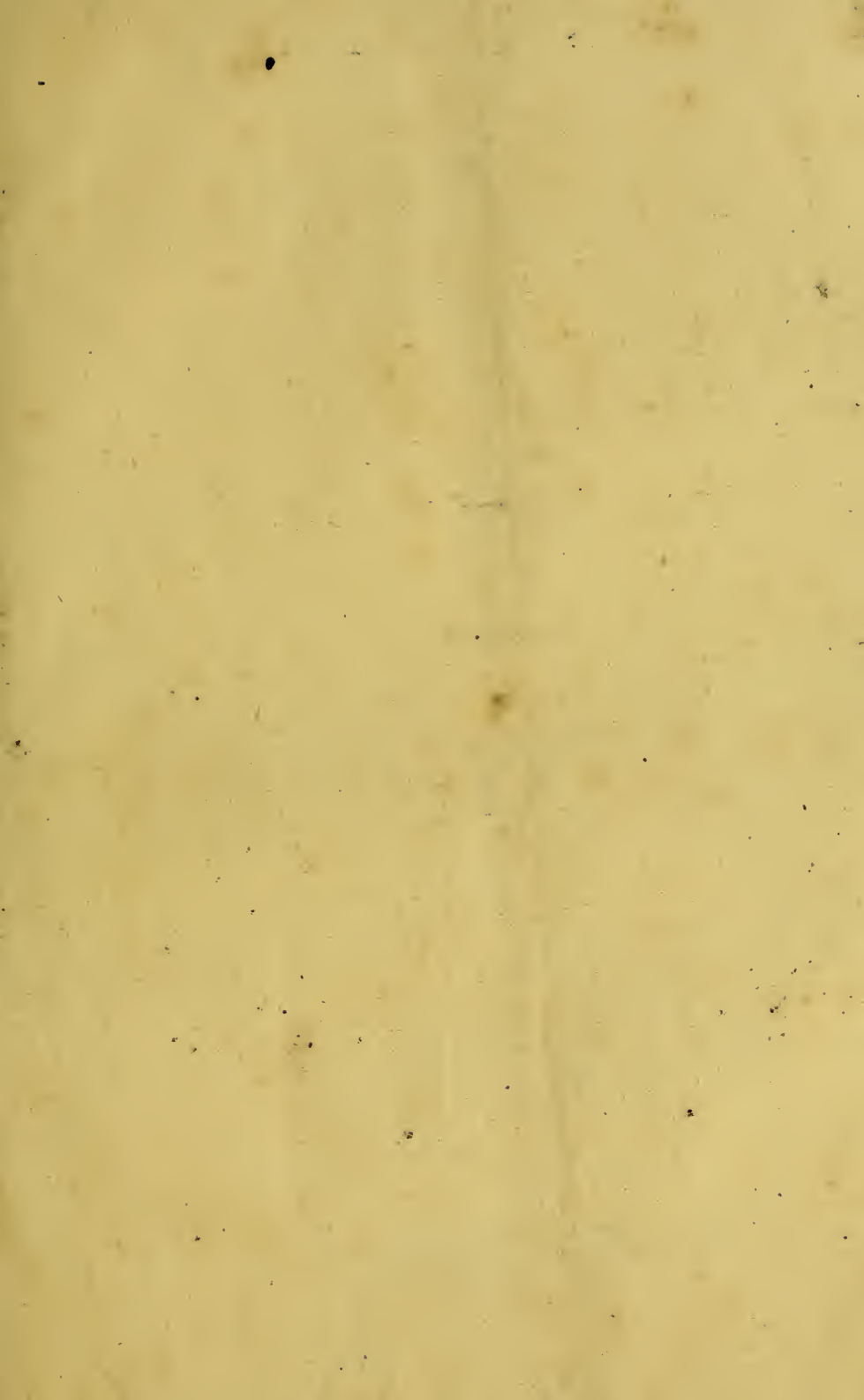


Such a literal appropriation of labor may be impracticable, but would it if made, devolve a heavier responsibility upon each Christian than now rests upon him. The claims of the world are just as pressing, and the call to entire and holy consecration just as loud and affecting now—as it could be under such an arrangement. God does purpose to convert the world through the agency of His church, and therefore each one should so toil and pray, as if piously resolved to accomplish his own full proportional share, of the sublime whole.

Oh! if the Christians represented in this General Association, would only enter upon the work assigned them, with the resolute pious purpose that every destitute section within their boundaries should be supplied with the gospel in the shortest possible time, that the whole State should be, under the favor of God, redeemed from all satanic thralldom, it—would be a purpose within the scope of their abilities, but how much more of prayer and labor and liberality would such a purpose induce than are now given. God will honor the faith that proposes and purposes such results, by giving to its desires and labors the success it resolves to gain.

In closing this—perhaps too protracted discourse—suffer me to urge upon you my brethren—and would to God the appeal could reach and move the hearts of all the members of all our churches—by your love of native land, intensified and sanctified by your love to Jesus Christ—by the spiritual relations you sustain to the people of this commonwealth—by the pressing calls to your Christian solicitude—by the great purpose which Jehovah seeks to attain through your pious agency—send up to the throne of God fervently and constantly the petition—and let the consecration of your life prove that it is the absorbing desire of your heart.—“Let my life be given to me at my petition, and my people at my request.”





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EDITED BY REV. HENRY KEELING,

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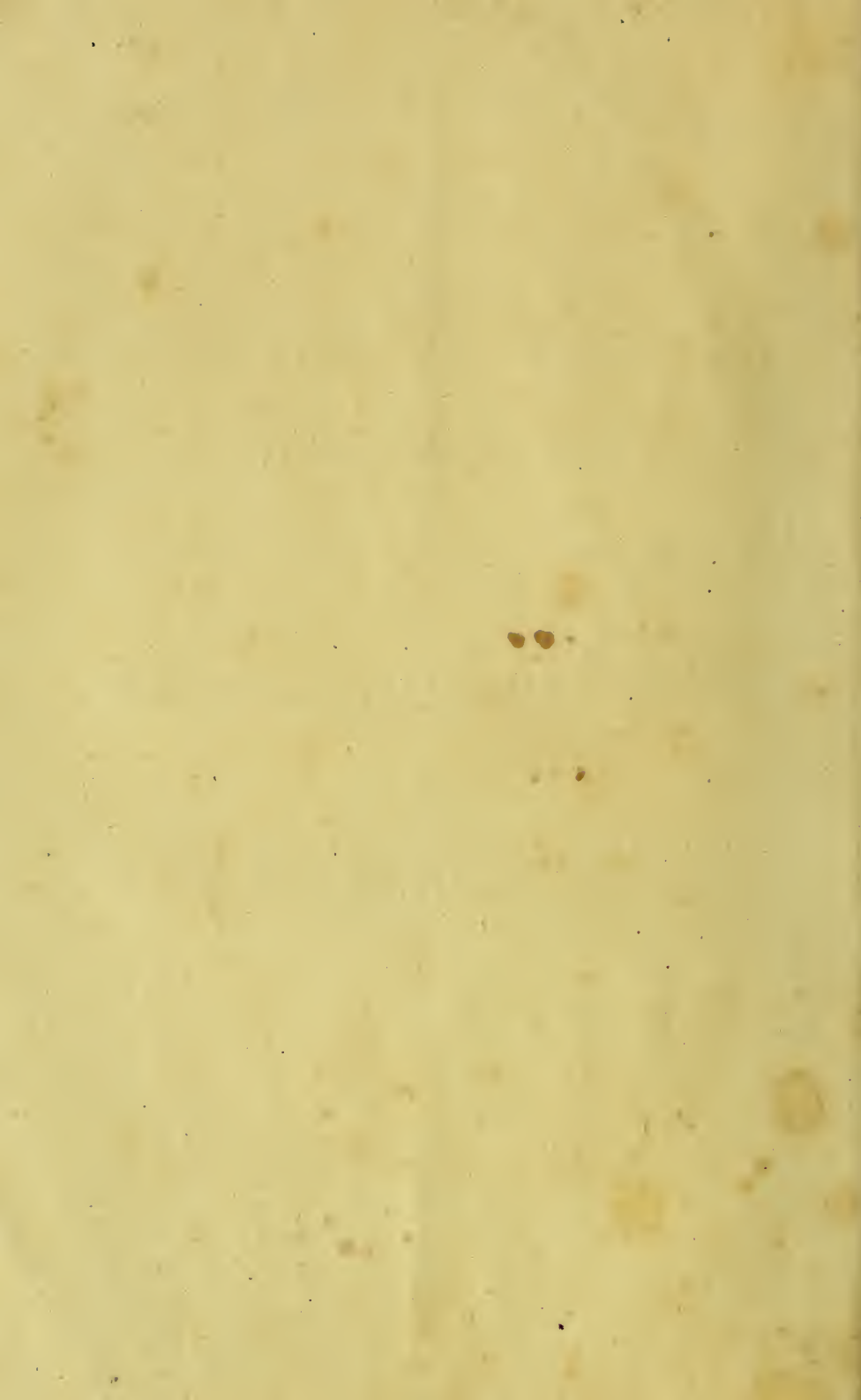
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A Sermon, by Rev. J. H. LUTHER, of South Carolina.

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THE FLOWERS COLLECTION

# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

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## DIVINE SYMPATHY:

A Sermon by Rev. J. H. LUTHER, South Carolina.

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*"For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities."* HEB. IV: 15.

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THIS passage presents to us a SYMPATHIZING SAVIOUR. The words "cannot be touched," &c., might be rendered:—*cannot sympathize with us.*

We are constitutionally dependent upon human sympathy. The irresistible impulses of the heart, as well as the history of man, proclaim us children of one Father, members of the same great family, partakers of a common nature, and as such, mutually dependent.

You habitually place yourself in your friend's condition in consequence of the conviction that he is intimately acquainted with your's, relishing your joys, as if they were his own, adopting your sorrows, as if they had befallen him, and ministering to your gratification, as if he were responding to the calls of his own soul.

Of such a character is human sympathy. Here is the law of social development, the chain which keeps men back from solitude, the basis of authority and obedience from the hearth-stone to the council-chamber.

Here you see the condition of usefulness. To bless your race, you must make your way into the common sentiment of humanity. To reclaim the wanderer, you must

feel with him. His knowledge of this union, will do more to win him back to rectitude than the lonely pride of his own heart, or the stern threat of justice.

And here you see the source of happiness. As long as we believe that our friend is hoping for us and feeling with us, that his heart is open for our fears and joys as ours is for his hope and charity, so long we are happy. Life then is not intolerable, for the burden is divided, the peace is shared.

Confine your sorrows to your own soul and they will make it a scene of desolation. Grief loses much of its terror when it is let loose; joys grow warmer when brought to light. Bound your happiness by the little circle of your own experience and it will soon fade into unsatisfying shadows, because it is robbed of the life which it was designed to receive by giving life to others.

Such is the benevolent provision of All-wise Goodness for our mutual well-being. But man's power to help man is limited. The soul will not be confined in its longings and actions to its human relations, but true to its destiny, passes out of itself to the supreme Being and the spirit world. But hither the human arm cannot reach to help or the human voice to cheer. There are times when men feel lonely and alone. The company of their fellows then only makes the gloom more terrible, because it shows the helplessness of all. Here we need the fellowship of a Being who can share our sorrow without feeling our hopelessness, who can understand our wants and strengthen our desires into hopes.

In our better moments the conviction of our immortality leads us to desire a deeper insight into our being, and an additional power to enjoy it. Believing that we are related to a Holy Sovereign, we feel like aliens shut out from our home and our birth-right. Disturbed by the pains of wrong doing, we start back from the future, convinced of our inability to fulfill the design of pure beings. In these states we feel the loneliness of the immortal joined to a helpless mortality. And here the soul, weary of looking down among its own kind for sympathy, turns away from man in sin to God in man,

who, by uniting the human and the divine, can feel with his creatures the infirmities of earthly beings.

The life of Christ on earth brings to light the blessed fact, that he who feels the malady of sin and the loneliness of a depraved heart, and desires a restoration to moral health and the enjoyment of God, can look to the Nazarene Teacher, and see in him a being who is fitted by his humanity to sympathize with him, fitted by his sovereignty to restore him to the inheritance which he lost in the common fall.

Let us contemplate, then, *Christ's sympathy with believers*.

I. In respect to the grounds we have for believing that this sympathy is secured, and

II. In respect to the blessings which flow from this sympathy.

Believers may rest assured of the sympathy of Christ on account of His union with the Father. Believers are the creatures of God. Christ is one with God. What is God's is Christ's. What is created by the Father is loved by the Son. Both are perfect in their conceptions and affections, and existing in each other, they must look with the same feelings upon the objects of the Infinite Creator. Believers are not only the creatures of God, but his intelligent, moral creatures; and they are not only immortal beings, but by virtue of the new birth they have become heirs of a blessed inheritance. Christ, then, by his union with the Father feels the same interest in believers that a Holy Sovereign feels in whatever is like him.

But the union of God, the Father, and our Saviour was not less intimate in the subordination of the latter as Mediator. It is in this condition that our Lord says "the Father loveth the Son."

To the Mediator God speaks when he calls him his son, his only begotten, his beloved son. It was in this midway position between sovereign divinity and dependent humanity, or rather in the union of the two states, that the prayer of our Lord was offered, that those whom the Father had given him should be one in them, as he



is one with the Father. It is in viewing our Lord in his mediatorial office, that we see in its greatest force the relation of our subject to the scheme of grace: Christ can feel with the Father—Christ can feel with the creature. He feels as God, he feels as man; in one position the dignity and authority of the Law-giver, the holiness and justice of the law; in the other the frailty and humiliation of the subject, the loneliness and helplessness of the child of wrath. The nature of Christ's office work, then, as Mediator, secures to believers divine sympathy.

But our Lord took upon him our form and nature. Hitherto we have contemplated him as one with the Father, with the glory and freedom of a heavenly being; as the beloved Son, leaving for awhile the prerogative and state of sovereignty, to reveal in a clearer light the glory and truth and claims of the Father, and thus win man to the love of the true and holy. Yet for Christ, the Mediator, to enjoy perfect sympathy with the creature, the assumption of humanity was necessary. To walk among men and to be seen of them, God must become man. To reconcile the world to God, the Mediator must show in his own person the union of the creature and his God, and the harmony which could exist between the two. *The satisfaction to be made* rendered the assumption of our nature necessary. An obstacle interposing between infinite mercy and infinite justice was to be removed. A *penalty* was to be borne which would entitle man to pardon; and a righteousness was to be achieved, which *imputed* to the *believer* would constitute his *justification*. This obstacle was to be removed by suffering, the spectacle of visible and invisible worlds; Christ takes therefore the form of man. And this righteousness for justification was to be accomplished for man, and so it must be wrought out by God in man, that man might see and acknowledge it, and God own it. Hence the necessity of a Mediator in a condition to make his humiliation visible—a Mediator with infirmities consequent on Adam's sin, subject to hunger and thirst; subject to the social derangement which has cursed a guilty race, the malice, the suspicion of man, his selfishness, his oppo-



sition to whatever is true and good, exposed to the hardships of a world cursed for our sakes, of the earth refusing nourishment without the penalty of toil and care, of the elements conspiring to surround us with dangers. In this condition the Mediator was fitted to sympathize with those whom the Father had given him. He fasted forty days, and he knew the restless misery of a craving hunger. He thirsted, and he felt for his disciples when they begged for his sake a cup of cold water. He braved the winds and the dews, the cold and the secret wickedness of the night, and well could he sympathize with his faithful, driven by their persecutors into dens and dungeons. He subjected himself to the malice of his enemies, to the peculiar hardships of poverty, to the contempt of a lowly life, that no kind of human suffering should be without the sphere of his trial.

Christ then having assumed the form of humanity, can feel with the human race. Having been familiar with poverty, he can feel with the poor man. Stripped of rank, though in a royal line, he can find in his obscurity the victim of wrong and neglect, and walk with him as he does with the noble and fortunate who feel the cruel envy of the less fortunate. Hungry, cold, thirsty, the sorrows of the wretched out-casts of this world he can never forget. Having endured the contempt of the proud, he knows the forlorn condition of those who in persecution cling to the right, unmoved by the rewards of the wrong. And he recognizes in the patient grief of the godly mourner, a suffering akin to that which made its home in his soul during all his life on the earth. Pursued by the cruel jealousy of power in the morn of his assumed state, his sorrows lasted till human malice had done all that human malice can do in the dreadful tragedy on Calvary. Beginning his mission of love in his boyhood among the learned, whose ignorance he pitied, his last act was an exhibition of his sympathy with his grieving disciples and an assurance of his abiding presence. The fact then that our Lord was subject to the infirmities and suffering of man, is a ground on which believers may rely for divine sympathy.

We have thus far alluded only to those sufferings which are the condition of human existence. But a necessity was laid upon the Son of God to endure sufferings which we must believe are beyond the limit of human existence. As the compassionate Saviour walked among men, his compassion for the human race was continually showing itself. But looking deeper into his inner experience, as it revealed itself in his unreserved communion with his disciples, we see a sorrow which they with all their knowledge of their divine companion could not comprehend, which man may look upon, but not conceive of and surely not experience. As he associated with men, relieving them of their burden while he patiently bore the absence of common joys, we may understand how he sympathized with the unfortunate of the earth. As he persisted in his generous efforts to reach the hearts of the proud and powerful, we may faintly imagine how deeply he pitied them, how keenly he felt his humiliation. But beneath all this compassion for human suffering, there was a solicitude for man in opposition to God; and exceeding all his suffering, the result of human wrongs, was the sorrow unto death, caused by the contemplation of man in sin and the infliction of its penalty. In Christ suffering the sorrows of a poor despised out-cast, we view humanity in its greatest self-denial feeling with man and laboring for him. In Christ persisting through abuse and contempt to instruct and ameliorate; in Christ passing a night of agony in the garden and feeling on the cross the desertion of the Father, we view divinity intent on the restoration of man and patiently bearing the suffering of sin to achieve the salvation of the sinner. Here we behold the greatness, the excellence, the awful grandeur of the Atonement.

Let us now consider some of the blessings which flow from the divine sympathy.

The Son's mission was not without a purpose; nor was it undertaken without the certainty that this purpose would be effected. Expressed in general terms, this purpose was the manifestation of God's love to the world. But taking a more particular view of the end of our Lord's

labors, we may make a more specific statement, which while it harmonizes no less with truth will be far more in keeping with the closing scenes of his life. In rebuking the wickedness of the Jews, in teaching the multitude the basis and spirit of true religion, in calming the tempest, in restoring the sick and comforting the afflicted, the Saviour may be said with propriety to be showing his pity for the world, his interest in universal humanity. But it is no less true that Christ came into the world to receive those whom the Father had given him, to reclaim them from the world by these acts, which at the same time were performed for all, to attract them to his person, instruct them in the gracious scheme, prepare them to carry out his benevolent designs, and finally after devoting his life to them, leave them with the promise of his constant aid and everlasting companionship. In conformity to this view the seventeenth chapter of the gospel according to John, may be cited as furnishing an expression of our Lord's union with his disciples, exclusive of the rest of mankind.

In looking upon Christ then as the dispenser of blessing to believers, prompted by his sympathy, we are prepared as he enters upon his work to see those whom the Father had regenerated coming unto the Son, attracted thither by the divine beauty of his character, adhering to their heavenly companion by virtue of the union existing between their affections and sympathies. And as soon as the little band have obeyed the heavenly call and are introduced into the new life, we see the Saviour showing to them all the solicitude of a teacher, the affection of a brother, the humble attentions of a servant, the self-sacrificing spirit of a Benefactor and Redeemer. Feeling the cravings of hunger, he gave them bread; the infirmities of an earthly nature, he restored their sick; the strength of natural ties, he raised their dead. Knowing the power of the passions of the natural heart, and feeling the exposure of the soul to the allurements of a sinful world, he fortified them against the temptations of ambition, pride and lust. He exposed to them the deformity and impurity of sin, and the misery consequent



on its commission; the beauty and excellence of holiness, and the faith and love and charity which a view of the divine character should excite. He suffered them to share with him all the privileges of his society, but preserved them from the peculiar trials which he bore for their sake. And at the close of his earthly career he gave them power to carry out his Father's provisions of love to the world, promising not only his own presence, but that of the Comforter. He then committed them to his Father with all the fervor of affection and depth of sorrow, which the remembrance of their love and the knowledge of his last passion might be expected to excite. In this prayer for those whom the Father had given him it is remarkable, that he prays for all believers: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." The object of this prayer is the purity and peace of believers, in a word, their sanctification. In sympathizing with believers Christ designs to achieve the restoration of character to the divine original, by blessing the ordinary dispensations of Providence, and by exciting in the heart gracious emotions, befitting the heirs of everlasting life. This design is obvious in all his intercourse with his followers. Touched with the feeling of their infirmities, his warm affection led him to turn for them all the occurrences of life into channels of mercy, led him to convey to them the gracious gifts of love, gentleness, long suffering, faith and every other quality of the new character in man. And this was done that his image might be stamped upon their hearts, that there might be a likeness within, a similarity of conduct without. The last words of the farewell address secures the means, by which this end may be attained: "Lo! I am with you alway."

This companionship, so endearing, so profitable in the incarnation, was to be continued and is now enjoyed by every one who has received Christ by faith into his heart.

The relation may be recognized, as we have already intimated, in two classes of effects. First, in our daily life in the world, it gives us power to bear the duties,



the joys and sorrows of life with submissive meekness and cheerful, earnest energy. Secondly, in our inner, spiritual life it directly imparts to us gracious exercises. The divine presence felt after the ascension supported the disciples in all the events of their ministry. He who had in the flesh been mindful of their bodily wants, stilled the winds and restrained the deadly malice of the enemies of righteousness for their sakes, felt with them now in their self sacrificing efforts to diffuse the blessings of his gospel. He disposed the heathen to minister to their wants. He kept them from the hurt of poisonous reptiles and wild beasts, making the irrational creation sensible of the presence of holy character. All the sorrows of life which make the ungodly miserable, all the privations which excite the natural heart to murmurings against God, were borne by them with meekness and satisfaction, were productive in them of the graces of patience and submission, for they felt that with them was their divine master who had borne harder trials for their sakes. They knew that he who had wept at the grave of their friend, so tenderly responding to the sorrow of the bereaved sisters, felt for them as they surrendered the comforts of home and the society of their friends to preach the gospel of reconciliation. They felt his presence now as truly as they did when they sat upon the ground and partook of his bread, or when the angry winds listened to his voice and bore them to the land.

They felt his presence also in the reception of every grace. Their submissive habits of mind, their anxious compassion for the impenitent, their brotherly affection, their grateful emotions toward God, their transporting hopes, their lively faith, their vivid conceptions of the joys to come, these they regarded as the gifts of the Lord who was in them and with them, walking by their side, ministering of the riches which he had earned by his life and death to the chosen heirs of his love. Hence for them to live was Christ. This presence seemed as real to them, as was his presence on the mount when they beheld his glory, when they listened to his instructions by the way, when they shared his prayers in the garden,

when their hearts burned as he opened the prophets to them.

My brethren, companions of Christ—this sympathy which the early disciples enjoyed, you enjoy. Its glorious blessings you may enjoy, if you walk as they walked in the path of duty, ready to suffer for Christ, if you can glorify him who gave his life that you might share his glory. They were blessed so long, as they felt his presence. Feeling this presence they went out into the world with a new character, marked men, to preach his gospel to be sure; but we are all to preach Christ by showing in our lives the new life which faith has given to the soul. Living in him and suffering for him he will gladden us with fresh tokens of his presence.

The presence of Christ in this world of sin where temptations assail us at every point—what a triumph of infinite love over evil! The presence of Christ in peril, in prosperity—how will it secure us from every thought of pride and ingratitude! The presence of Christ—how can Satan injure us so long as we have such a companion? How sure is our progress heavenward while we have the light of his countenance and the cheering tones of his voice.

Believing that we have the sympathy of such a friend, we should suffer the desertion of our fellow-men without repining. It is not strange that the ungodly man feels lonely when he loses the friendship of the world, for when human aid is denied him there is no arm on which he may rest, no approving look to strengthen his purpose or to re-assure him in the battle of life. But the child of God is never left in this desolate condition. Though the applause of men seem good; dependent as we surely are for much of our happiness and usefulness on our union with those whom we can love and trust; yet to the approval of our fellow-men we should look for only a small portion of the motive power necessary to incite us to duty and progress; and our union with others should seem but a small source of happiness compared with that found in the union of the new heart with Christ. Whether treachery, death, or what not, rob us of the kindness of our fellow-men, we should remember that we

have a companion whose voice may ever be heard, and whose arm is stronger than the combined powers of earth and hell. Though we seem, as we are, pilgrims in a strange land, unknown, uncared for, yet we may feel the presence of a goodly retinue of servants ministering to our happiness. We may live in the communion of our Father; we may enjoy gracious exercises of gratitude, love, patience, humility, charity, peace, knowledge — sweet sisters of heaven, waiting upon a brother, an heir of glory. These are the pledges of the better land to which we are hastening. How can we feel lonely while these celestial attendants are constantly by us, waiting to support us in the dark valley of the shadow of death. How ungrateful then to mourn the loss of earthly friendship. What trifles are the losses of earth to him who is the heir of mansions of glory.

Believing that we have the sympathy of Christ, we should cheerfully suffer for him. This is what we do for a friend. As the earth gives back to the gentle dews the sweetness of its herbs, so the grateful heart, as it revives beneath the breath of kindred sympathy, unites all its grateful impulses to bless its benefactor. Suffering for Christ draws us more fully into sympathy with him, whose whole life was suffering.

Believing that we have the sympathy of Christ, we should try to grow like him. There is a partial likeness in all who love each other. Continued love makes the likeness more and more perfect. If we have the affection of one who is our superior, we desire a complete likeness of mind and union of feelings, for sympathy with superior character is never perfect. The life of Christ is the perfect development of goodness. His prayer was that we might be like him. He has given us his life for a model and the Holy Spirit to help us attain to it. How inadequate must be our conception of Christ's feelings toward us till we are more like him. How incomplete is our happiness till we reach his purity. How should the promise that we are to be made perfect in his likeness re-assure us in our conflicts with wicked men and these depraved hearts. This promise brightened the last days of the venerable John. "We know that when he shall



appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

We should also desire that others may be like him. If we have a friend, we love and honor, we naturally wish that others may appreciate his character. We are fond of holding up his picture, of recounting his self-sacrificing acts, of extolling his motives. Not only should we hold up the character of Christ to attract men to it, not only should his likeness prominently appear in us to confirm the divine original, but we should be earnest in persuading others to follow our Lord, anxious to have others enjoy his precious gifts. The worth of the undying soul, the enjoyment it might have in yielding up its love for sin, the brightness with which it may shine in another world — these considerations should make us tremble lest we fail to rescue a wandering friend from his perilous state. There is no higher proof of our love to Christ than our pity for the world. The believer whose heart is enlarged with the kind of benevolence, which actuated his master, will never forget the riches of grace. In contemplating the plan of redemption he will trace it to infinite love, to universal compassion. To him heaven will seem large enough for all whom he may win to Christ. Viewing thus the provisions of mercy, his compassion will result in toil and prayer, faith in the promises, hope of his personal success. Pitying men as the son of God pitied them, he will like him exhort all the weary and heavyladen to come unto him. Full of the love of God and of faith, he will like an apostle obey the longings of his soul and brave every peril to win men to God.

Finally. Being assured that Christ is sympathizing with us, that all his dealings with us grow out of his love and that they are designed to make us like him, let us be submissive to the divine will, let us constantly labor to make others happy by showing them the way of life. If Christ is our teacher, let us sit willingly at his feet. If He is our companion, let us show the happy influences of His society.

All this we may do, for we have an High Priest, who *can* be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points as we are yet without sin.



NOTE.—Our thanks are due to the personally unknown, but by reputation esteemed author, for the foregoing excellent sermon. To these we may add, in advance, those of some of our readers. We say "some," because to appreciate consolation, one must be acquainted with sorrow. This sermon, postponed for so long a time, found us and those whom we love most on earth, in deep affliction. It was balm to our distressed heart, and we read it over and over again, day after day for many days.

Divine sympathy. The sympathy of God. The sympathy of God, *for* and *with* man: man, fallen, sinful, weak, helpless, suffering, and fearful; but through Christ, graciously restored man!

Immediately thronged around our imagination clusters of the bright promises of Scripture, to one of which we will devote the remainder of the present issue. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." The connexion of the text is thus:

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. vii: 17.

There are here, it is true, other thoughts, subsidiary to the main thought—but that is still the sympathy of God—the tenderness of the divine heart towards suffering humanity, and its fellow suffering with it. What a thought! And how exhibited! The infinitely glorious God, bending over his suffering creature, napkin or kerchief in hand, wiping tears from eyes, dimmed and marred by sorrow.

One subsidiary thought is that of *protection*. This is a fundamental idea in the relation of a shepherd for his flock. "He giveth," said the great Shepherd, "his life for the sheep." At all hazards he protects them. This

idea is forcibly expressed in the words: "He that sitteth on the throne *shall dwell among them*," shall raise his tabernacle or tent over them, or as Beausobre and Lefebvre have rendered it, into the French language, "shall cover them under his pavilion." Yes! the poorest disciple of Jesus Christ is, however, unknown to the world, and exposed to devouring wolves, so under the protection of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, as the soldier in the tent of the commander in chief, and that, too, the Captain of our salvation.

Another thought is that of *supply*. This is included in the office of shepherd: especially pasture, and water, and security from the parching heat of an eastern sun. Here is the supply. No more scorching rays; for they are under a divine canopy: no more thirst; for the fountains are inexhaustible: no more hunger, for the Lamb shall "*feed*" them, or fulfil towards them the office of *Pastor* or *Shepherd*.

Another thought is that of *condescension*. If a soldier aids his general, nothing is thought of it. The world thinks him honored, he thinks himself honored, by the act. If he aids his comrade, this is no miracle; for they are equals. But should Washington, or Napoleon, or Scott, visit the tent of a suffering soldier, and minister to his necessity, "how would the world admire!" "Admire, as if God again, as once in Gibeon, should interrupt the course of the undeviating and punctual sun." But here, God himself stoops, and exhibits sympathy with a suffering mortal. Do you think it incredible? It would indeed seem to be incredible, did we not know it to be real. Jesus Christ—God himself, in human flesh, actually *did it*. To enlighten the minds of his infatuated and bewildered disciples, and by example, stronger and clearer than words, to solve for their carnal understandings, their own perplexing question, "who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" he *shows* them that the *greatest* should be he that became *servant* of all. He arose from the table, threw aside his garment, girded himself with a towel, and washed and wiped the feet of his own disciples. What a lesson! Can we ever forget it, or misapprehend its construction?

'The greatest is he who, forgetful of superiority of position, and of everything else, except benevolence, even by placing himself under the greatest inconvenience, renders most and best service to any and all. "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich. The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, (or serve) and to give his life a ransom for the many."

But the leading thought, as we said, is *sympathy*: sympathy exhibiting itself in action correspondent with the feeling. Now, affecting as is the act, it is not so much the act itself, as the feeling which prompts to the act, that affects the recipient. Could we know that an act, itself of tenderness, was prompted by causeless ill-will, the soul would pity or despise it, and could not approve it, were it possible in the greatest and best of beings, which it of course is not. An act of protection, supply, tenderness, when we needed all, prompted by pride or self-love, we should regard so much the less. But let it be prompted by sympathy—the sympathy of the benefactor with the beneficiary—the *doer* suffering with the *object*—the act only a *manifestation* of the feeling producing the act—and how different the effect! Such are God's acts towards his people, and his sympathy with them.

This single thought is enough for half a dozen sermons. Take a single illustration of it. It is the case of that faithful servant of Christ, the martyr Stephen. Acts vii.

Certain of the synagogue had by bribery and perjury secured the accusation, (which was equivalent to the condemnation and execution) of this faithful man—and it was for his goodness and fidelity they sought his destruction—no uncommon occurrence—sometimes by those who think they are doing God service. The high priest, as a matter of form, admits his defence, but admits it, of course, with stopped ears. But ere they could run upon him, and drag him from the city, and stone from his crushed body his flaming and holy Spirit, resigned to the hands of his faithful Lord, what was he permitted to see? Why, "behold he saw the heavens opened, and



the glory of God, and Jesus the Son of Man, *standing* on the right hand of God." Why on this occasion *standing*? Jesus was indeed exalted a Prince and a Saviour; and his *seat* was at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Is it to exhibit his displeasure for wicked and cruel acts, or to welcome his coming servant, that he *rises* from his seat and *stands*?

After all, speak, hear, write, read, think what we may, it is difficult to realize the thought, that God, in Christ, sympathizes as truly and deeply with every one of us, every where, and under all circumstances, and in every sorrow, as he did when on earth, with Mary, Martha, and their amiable brother Lazarus; or with John, the author of the words to which we have invited special attention; or with Paul, the author of the excellent sermon from which we fear we are calling attention. But the thought is true, true as the gospel itself; for it is breathed in every breath of it: and the means by which he does this, are his word, his providence, his spirit in its gracious manifestations in communion with our devotions. Our trials, he knows; our inward emotions, not breathed, much less spoken, he hears; the tears that darken our cheeks and even wet our pillows, he sees; and he *feels for each*, as, were the feelings of all concentrated on one, that one could not receive the sympathies of our whole race, from Adam to the last mortal that shall breathe the vital air, ere the dead are waked by the sound of the last trump.

EDITOR.





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